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**BILL SCHUETTE**  
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*Testimony of Alan Cropsey, Director of Legislative Relations, Department of the Attorney General, on behalf of Attorney General Bill Schuette to the Senate Judiciary Committee on December 2, 2014.*

Thank you Chairman Jones and Senate Judiciary Committee members for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 1141**, legislation creating the Criminal Justice Policy Commission.

Thank you also for giving crime victims, through the Attorney General, a position on the commission. As you are aware, he is a strong supporter and committed advocate on behalf of crime victims. He is the very first Michigan Attorney General to appoint a director of crime victim advocacy.

Attorney General Schuette served on the Senate Judiciary Committee when it was chaired by Senator Van Regenmorter, the author of the Crime Victims' Rights Act and Crime Victims' Rights constitutional amendment, and he assisted in crafting this state's first statutory sentencing guidelines during the 1997-1998 session of the Michigan legislature. Their key guiding principle was to uphold the Michigan Constitution's Bill of Rights, Article 1 Section 1 which states:

All political power is inherent in the people. Government is instituted for their equal benefit, security and protection.

Attorney General Schuette whole-heartedly agrees with recommendations that accomplish this first and most important function of the criminal justice system. In fact, SB 1141 lists "providing for the protection of the public" as the first objective of any modification to the sentencing guidelines.

The danger posed to our communities by repeat felons is real, and the damage is permanent. Every year, just under 60% of new Michigan prisoners are failed parolees and probationers, almost twice the national average. These failures illustrate the need for reform in our criminal justice system.

Approximately 7 of every 10 Michigan prisoners are violent offenders, compare that to a national average of 5.3 in 10. While budget concerns are important and should be considered, pressure to release dangerous criminals is not the way to address this issue.

Michigan should not be known as the state with three of our nation's top 5 most violent cities. We will never experience a full and complete economic recovery until people feel safe in their streets, schools and neighborhoods.

We welcome the legislative debate on corrections reform and we need to have these conversations in the light of day, with full committee hearings that include testimony from crime

victims, police officers, prosecutors, judges, parole and probation officers, community corrections practitioners, and our communities.

Effective reform, spearheaded by this Criminal Justice Policy Commission, will require a thoughtful, forward-looking approach that places public safety first. Attorney General Schuette looks forward to representing crime victims on this Commission as it works to find solutions to these vexing problems in our criminal justice system.

Thank you.